

# *Sketch*

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## A Long Time

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# A Long Time

Anonymous

## **Abstract**

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## *A Long Time*

SUE FROWNED as she noticed the polite smile which was held on her mother's face as they left the house. She could relax now, Sue thought, we're through with another one.

Her mother shifted the boxes in her arms and fumbled for the car keys in her purse. "Take these, Sue." She held out the boxes.

"I can't." Sue's arms were loaded with a variety of packages. Streamers of ribbon hung aimlessly from them.

"Never mind, I found them by myself," her mother sighed.

Sue stood patiently as Mrs. Brayson reached to the back-seat and deposited her packages, then held her hands out for Sue's load. We look like we've been to a Christmas party, Sue thought — or better still — on a pirate's raid. "Showers are a racket," she mentioned quietly.

"You should complain as long as they're for you." Her mother had a contented look.

"That's what I mean. I feel guilty; it's just a racket."

"Nonsense! Look at the nice things you got — that is, all except those disgusting hot pad holders. It was embarrassing when you opened them."

"Mother, what a terrible thing to say. Betty made them herself."

"How noble of her. Well — it seems to me she could have at least got you something decent — you've known each other for eight years."

"And she's also been to two other showers for me — maybe she doesn't feel she has to completely set me up in house-keeping."

"Now, honey, don't get upset. You only have two more showers to go to you know. You're just excited — just excited." Her hand dropped from the steering wheel and patted Sue's arm.

"Two? Patty's and . . .?"

"When I was at Selanea Club the other night we were just

talking about how it had been at least two years since any of our daughters had had a wedding, and Mrs. Burroughs, you know — up on Rainbow drive — well, Mrs. Burroughs thought it would be just lovely if we had a little something for you and we decided that Monday night. . . .”

“Mother! I don’t even know any of them. They don’t know me. They don’t want to know me.”

“Nonsense! Of course they know you. They read the papers. They remember when you were queen of the prom — countess of the Mardi Gras. Why, they know you — they’ve followed your whole career. You’ve been such a good daughter!” Her hand reached out and gave another soothing pat.

“You didn’t suggest . . .”

“Of course I didn’t.” Her mother laughed nervously. “Mrs. Burroughs suggested it herself.”

Sue choked back an angry protest, leaned her back against the car seat, and closed her eyes. Two weeks. Two weeks more and she could forget about it. She and Bill could forget about it. She felt the car turn up the curved hill to home. She pictured the large brick house — maybe a light on in Dad’s room. Such a spacious home, her mother would say — such a spacious home.

This week has gone fast, Sue thought, as she sat down at the desk to write more of the thank-you notes. She remembered the careful sorting of presents, the countless other little details that had had to be taken care of during the last week. It was a good thing Bill couldn’t be here until the day of the ceremony — how he would hate all of this bother. It’ll be different with us, she consoled herself — it’ll be so different.

She picked up the next card and read the name — Mrs. John Gillespie — who in the world was Mrs. John Gillespie and why would she be sending . . .”

Sue checked through the invitation list — there it was — added in her mother’s handwriting — she shrugged wearily — reached for a piece of note paper and wrote — ‘Dear Mrs. Gillespie’ — I’ll make it nice, she thought — because I get to sign it Sue and Bill — Sue and Bill. She jumped and whirled

as she heard steps behind her — her mother was walking towards the telephone.

“Sue, honey, do you think I should have my hair fixed today or tomorrow? I simply haven’t had time to do a thing for myself — just haggard . . . ” Her voice became faint as she opened the book on the telephone table.

Sue studied her mother — smooth hair, still dark — stylishly cropped and curled — a strong, hard face with very tiny, controlled wrinkles. Don’t blame it on me, mother, I wanted to keep it simple — very simple — but oh, now, “we” had to have this and that. Her mother did look tired though, Sue thought; maybe I don’t appreciate what she’s doing. “Your hair looks nice now, mother.”

Mrs. Brayson stopped the restless thumbing through the book. “What? What? Oh, yes, my hair.” She scowled at the table. “Sue, you called the organist again?”

“No, but I will.”

“Never mind, I’ll call her, I was talking to Mrs. Morris yesterday and she mentioned the beautiful selection that was played at her niece’s wedding. I don’t suppose there’s even a chance that the organist will know it, but I’ll see.” Her voice trailed off with a muttering sigh.

“Mother! I’ve had the music selected for weeks. It’s all settled. It’s just what Bill and I want.”

“But this must be just beautiful — Mrs. Morris said all the guests were so impressed. Don’t you worry about it, honey; I can take care of it.”

“But . . . Oh, OK . . . ” It’s just the music, she thought, and you can take care of it — in a very capable manner too — just as you took care of adding that mousy little Watkins girl to the bridesmaids — Sue smiled — she should say that lovely youngest daughter of the Watkins — a nice family — the Watkins. She hated her sarcastic thoughts — her mother was working so hard, and the wedding did mean a lot to her — probably more than it does to Bill — or me — we’re just getting married — she’s losing her daughter. She snapped her thoughts back to the thank-you notes — ‘Dear Mrs. Handson . . . ’

“Oh, Sue, I forgot to tell you — they called about your

flowers this morning.”

“Oh, did they?”

“Yes, and they aren’t going to be able to get enough lilies of the valley for your spray.”

“But I just saw them yesterday — why didn’t they tell me then?”

“I suppose they just discovered it — but don’t get upset — I told them to fill in with baby orchids. Won’t that be just lovely — just lovely?”

“But mother, you shouldn’t have just . . .”

Mrs. Brayson cut her protest short. “Nothing’s too good for my oldest daughter. They’re expensive, but you deserve the best.”

“Oh mother, I don’t like . . .”

“I mean it, you deserve the best. I must call the newspaper about the rehearsal dinner.” She smirked as she dialed the number. “I’m turning into a regular press agent.”

Sue stared at the yellow wall back of the desk. The tiny rough bumps on the plaster grew wavy as hot tears filled her eyes — her throat was tight — she was so tired — so tired of fighting, fighting — and losing — her head dropped to the desk as she listened . . .

“This is Mrs. Brayson — Maybe you remember my daughter Sue is being married this Saturday night?”

Maybe you remember! Sue thought bitterly of the other stories — story after story after story. How could they forget?

“Oh, yes, it is exciting,” the voice oozed on, “ . . . rehearsal dinner Friday night at the house . . . um hmm — yes, our oldest daughter — she’s the granddaughter of the late Mr. Josh McCully, you know — yes — you’re welcome.”

The granddaughter, the granddaughter — her friends were already calling her that to her face — what were they saying behind her back? Sue winced. How peaceful it would be not to be the oldest daughter, the granddaughter — to be just Sue — she sat up and gave a quick swab at her eyes. In a week it would be just Sue and Bill.

The dressing room in the church was very plain. Its drabness suggested that it had seen too many weddings and

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